

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000957

SIPDIS

BRUSSELS FOR HINSON-JONES
NSC FOR FRAZER AND BYRNE
OSD FOR IKINS AND MCCONNELL
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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MEETING WITH NSA ALIYU MOHAMMED -- A
CONTINENTAL POTPOURRI

REF: A. A) ABUJA 900
 B. B) ABUJA 873
 C. C) ABUJA 956
 D. D) ABUJA 804

(U) Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During a post-Operation FOCUS RELIEF (OFR) round-table meeting with the Nigerian National Security Advisor (ref C), NSA Aliyu Mohammed also discussed continental issues and President Obasanjo's travel schedule. He said President Obasanjo would travel to Asia in late May, and would be back in Abuja only briefly on May 29 for celebrations of the second anniversary of his inauguration and Nigeria's transition to democracy. Mohammed noted that President Kabilo had been to Abuja, and would attend the HIV/AIDS Summit immediately followed by an official visit (This did not happen). On Sudan, Mohammed said President Bashir would offer John Garang autonomy for southern Sudan but with unfavorable terms. Egypt and Libya continued to demonstrate deep interest and concern for the changing Sudanese landscape. On Niger and Chad, Nigeria recently concluded an agreement with Chad and Niger for Nigerian forces to stabilize the area around Lake Chad. Nigeria is no longer planning additional food aid for Niger, believing it qualifies for broader international assistance. Finally, Libya continues to pressure Niger on loans taken by the Bare regime, which used territory as collateral. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Following the OFR round-table on April 19, Ambassador Jeter, DOD PDAS Bernd McConnell, AF PDAS Mark Bellamy, DATT, and Counselor for Regional Affairs called on National Security Advisor General (ret) Aliyu Mohammed. The NSA was joined by his principal assistant LTC Mohammed Inua Idris.

¶3. (C) In response to a series of questions from Ambassador Jeter, the NSA noted that Democratic Republic of Congo President Kabilo had recently visited Nigeria. (COMMENT: We understand that President Obasanjo traveled to the Presidential Wing of the Abuja airport to meet with President Kabilo. END COMMENT.) He said Kabilo was seeking Nigerian food assistance, but did not say whether Nigeria had agreed to provide it. Kabilo would also attend the HIV/AIDS Summit and would remain afterward for an official visit to Nigeria (Kabilo was a no-show and Congo was not represented). The NSA, however, did state that the Nigerian Government was no longer planning to purchase food aid for Niger, as he understood that Niger was eligible to receive U.S. food assistance itself. (COMMENT: We understand that the Department has verified that there is a serious drought and food shortage in Niger, and a request has been made to the U.S. for PL 480 assistance. END COMMENT.)

¶4. (C) The NSA noted that President Obasanjo would make an official visit to Japan in late May, and then go on to Indonesia for a G-15 conference. He would return to Nigeria on May 29 in order to participate in the ceremonies celebrating the May 29, 1999 inauguration of a democratically elected government. He would then depart later the same day to participate in celebrations for the founding of the CNN television network to which he has been invited by CNN President Ted Turner.

¶5. (C) The NSA then went on to discuss a number of other continental issues. He noted that based on discussions between the Sudanese and the Kenyans, he believed Sudanese President Bashir would offer John Garang autonomy for southern Sudan but with terms that would not be acceptable to Garang. It would not be easy for Garang to get control over the southern Sudanese oilfields, or to demarcate boundaries through the swamps in the south. The NSA also noted that the

Libyans and the Egyptians were talking with Sudanese President Bashir regarding their concerns about southern Sudanese autonomy. The Egyptians were particularly worried about the prospect of an autonomous southern Sudan taking steps to dam or otherwise impede the flow of the Nile, Egypt's most sensitive foreign policy issue. There would be no resolution of the Sudan situation without Egypt.

16. (C) The NSA further stated his belief that Sudanese opposition leader El Turabi did not realize that at least 75 percent of the Sudanese no longer supported him. Ambassador Jeter told the NSA that U.S. Congressman Mike McNulty was very interested in Sudanese matters, and the Congressman had emphasized during a meeting with President Obasanjo that the SPLA and Garang would have to be engaged to reach a resolution to the conflict (Ref D). He added that there was great interest in the Sudan among religious and other groups in the United States, including a wide array of Congressional leaders.

17. (C) The NSA then said the pressure of drought in southern Niger and in Chad was making the area around Lake Chad more unstable. Nigeria recently reached an agreement with Chad and Niger for Nigerian forces to try to stabilize the area. He also noted that Libyan leader Qadhafi continued to be interested in the situation in Chad and that Chadian President Idris Deby would travel to Tripoli to meet with Qadhafi to discuss relations. The NSA stated that Libyan pressure on the Nigerien Government, particularly regarding loans that had been made during the Bare regime that had used Nigerien territory as collateral, had been increasing.

18. (C) In a brief reference to Burkina Faso, the NSA noted that it too was interested in receiving some sort of food assistance from Nigeria. He mentioned that there would be an upcoming meeting between President Obasanjo and President Campaore, implying that Obasanjo might visit Ouagadougou in the very near future.

Jeter